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ABSTRACT

Since the mid-1970s, participatory research (PR) has provided an alternative approach to those development systems that rely on outside experts and implement predetermined solutions. PR empowers disadvantaged people by recognizing them as co-researchers working together to gather information and implement solutions to their problems. This paper provides a detailed definition of participatory research, outlines the process involved in conducting such research, and presents the application of this information in the context of a PR study conducted in northeastern Brazil. The study evaluated whether a PR study could fulfill its practical and theoretical goals when applied to an educational development project in an urban, low-income community of northeastern Brazil. Consequently, the research team raised three questions: How should this community define its educational needs?; How should it strive to locate resources associated with the previously defined needs?; and How should this initiative continue after the facilitator's departure? By addressing these questions over a 10-month period, the research participants struggled together in an effort to identify the community's assets, to evaluate its liabilities, and to construct processes that would lead to educational improvements in the area. Practical results for the community included a collection of educational necessities in the area, the documentation of plans to address these needs, a list of skilled people and agencies willing to help implement the plans, and training in the skills needed to facilitate such activities. Theoretical contributions included the development of a taxonomy of participation, additional details of PR methods, and ideas for post-fieldwork analysis. Contains 5 notes, 4 figures, 1 table, and 22 references and additional resources. (Author/BT)

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Education for the Future:

Participatory Research as a Link between Non-formal Adult Education and Community Development in Brazil

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As presented at the annual meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society
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Abstract

Since the mid-1970s, participatory research (PR) has provided an alternative approach to those development systems that rely on outside experts and implement predetermined solutions. PR empowers disadvantaged people by recognizing them as co-researchers working together to gather information and implement solutions to their problems. This article provides a detailed definition of participatory research (PR), outlines the process involved in conducting such a study, and presents the application of this information in the context of a particular PR study conducted in Northeaster Brazil.

The study evaluated whether a PR study could fulfill its practical and theoretical goals when applied to an educational development project in an urban, low-income community of Northeastern Brazil. Consequently, the research team raised three consecutive questions:

a. How should this community define its educational needs?

b. How should this community strive to locate resources associated with the needs previously defined?

c. How should this initiative continue after the facilitator's departure?

By addressing these questions over a 10-month period of time (September 1997 - June 1998), the research participants struggled together in an effort to identify the community's assets, to evaluate its liabilities, and to construct processes that would lead to educational improvements in the area. The practical results for the community included a collection of educational necessities in the area, the documentation of plans to address these needs, a list of skilled people and agencies willing to help implement the plans, and training in the skills needed to facilitate such activities. Theoretical contributions included the development of a taxonomy of participation, additional details of PR methods, and ideas for post-fieldwork analysis.

For those interested in learning more about PR, a listing of key scholars, journals, and academic societies is provided in addition to the references.

EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE:

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AS A LINK BETWEEN NON-FORMAL ADULT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN BRAZIL

Since the mid-1970s participatory research (PR) has served as a dynamic stimulus for low-income community development throughout the world. As a bridge between theory and practice, PR has grown into a major form of action-oriented research that combines the activities of investigation, education, and neighborhood revitalization by engaging disadvantaged people as co-researchers. This paper presents some of the major defining factors of PR, expresses the challenges involved in offering such a definition, and explains the typical stages of a participatory research study. Also presented are the details of a specific participatory research investigation conducted in Northeastern Brazil including the research question, results from the fieldwork portion of the study, and findings from the post-fieldwork analysis. Finally, a brief list of resources is provided for those interested in learning more about PR.

Definition of Participatory Research

The theory of PR, or as I am offering here as a definition, has remained fairly consistent since the conception of this form of research over 25 years ago.[1] PR can be described as a form of investigation were subjugated people work together with the research facilitator(s) to gather information and implement solutions to their problems. Hall (1975, 1982) outlines six points to explain PR further:

1. **The research has a timely and direct benefit for a community**; this type of social science research serves as a distinct contrast to studies were the investigator enters a community, collects the data, and leaves without offering any contributions to the research subjects.
2. **The research process involves the community in the entire research project**; the research participants direct the research as much as possible in data collection, analysis, and interpretation.
3. **The research process is part of a total educational experience**; both the research facilitators and the participants teach and learn from each other (Freire, 1982).
4. **The research is a dialectic process**; the research team actively discusses their interests and the interests of those who hold power and influence.
5. **The research liberates human creative potential and mobilizes human resource to solve social problems**; PR relies on residents to produce results giving them the opportunity to personally develop, express themselves in a

[1] While participatory research began as a distinct form of scientific investigation in the mid-1970s, it is important to note that it is built on a long-standing tradition of critical science research.

new and unique way, and begin to see themselves as assets to the community.

6. **The research has ideological implications**; PR is a politically charged methodology where the investigator is trying to tip the scales less in favor of the privileged and more in favor of the disadvantaged (i.e., discriminated, subjugated, oppressed, or financially distressed).

With this definition in mind, a participatory research facilitator will strive towards equalizing the uneven distribution of social and financial capital, empower oppressed groups with skills and abilities to exercise greater self-determination, and seek transformation of social realities that are imbalanced and show deferential preference to those who control assets and influence (Tandon & Brown, 1983).

The Challenge to Define PR

A review of the literature using the term "participatory research" can be confusing since researchers have chosen to use similar labels for their methodologies that are distinctly different. In an effort to clarify this confounding aspect of defining participatory research, I have created an organization chart that outlines how PR fits under the umbrella term, action-oriented research (Park, 1999). This overarching term represents all research that actively involves the *subjects* as co-researchers, and creates some type of practical and timely response.

Action-oriented research can be divided into two main camps: those that have a philosophical basis from critical science, and those that do not (See Figure 1).[2]

Figure 1: Organizational Chart for Action-oriented Research

[2] I have not listed all forms of action-oriented research, but only those that relate to obscuring the definition of participatory research. This organizational chart is derived from a theoretical discussion of PR in Park (1999).

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Critical science research parallels Neo-Marxist schools of thought, and seeks to create revolutionary change and equalize social and financial economies (i.e., pursuing emancipation from oppression). The *participatory research* that I speak of as defined by Budd Hall (1982) falls under this category, as does what Orlando Fals-Borda (1991) calls *participatory action research.*

The non-critical *action research* as introduced by Kurt Lewin (1946) seeks to create a direct and timely benefit for the research constituency, but does not attempt to restructure social inequalities. The focus in this type of research is to collectively resolve some type of problem with a group of research participants so that their system of administration can operate more effectively. William Foote Whyte (1991) has conducted a significant number of studies of this type in the context of business organizations. We begin to notice the difficulties in defining terms as Whyte and his colleagues call this form of study *participatory action research* as does the critical scientist Fals-Borda.

To further complicate the matter, some select critical science, participatory researchers have called their work action research (Stromquist, 1985; Reardon, 1998; Reardon, et al., 1993), and some action researchers have called their studies participatory research (Distefano, 1999; Gallardo, 1999).

The Marks of Participatory Research

In the context of this confusion, I developed a simple list that allows a reader to determine which writings belong in the genera of participatory research and which ones do not. Specifically, a PR investigation will include all or most of the following characteristics:

- **Disadvantaged group**: PR has its roots in working with impoverished communities in developing countries, and always operates with some type of group struggling to overcome social and/or financial adversity.
- **Questions and methods shaped by the participants**: Ideally the research participants should initiate the study and create the research question. Nevertheless, some studies are initiated by a research facilitator and presented to potential participants. In such a case the research question(s) and methods are at least approved and possibly modified by the research team.
- **Group meetings**: Most often, PR involves group meetings with the research team, not just individual interviews (although the research team can use interviews to collect their data).
- **Critical comparison**: The participants reflect on what they need and why they have these needs.
- **Action plans**: PR seeks the implementation of efforts to address the needs of the community. The goal in these activities is to change existing systems into ones that provide equal access to power and other resources.

In contrast to these characteristics are the qualities of non-critical, action-oriented studies that focus on the interests of non-oppressed groups (i.e., office workers, business managers), and seek to determine how *existing* systems can operate more effectively. These investigations are also distinct from PR when the research participants are not involved in creating or reviewing the relevance of the research question, when the studies rely primarily on individual interviews, and when the research includes no responsive action by the participants.

The Process of Participatory Research

Reason (1994) notes a criticism of participatory research, specifically that it tends to be rich methodologically, yet shy on methods. Fortunately, during the short time since he produced this writing advances have been made to provide better pragmatic guidelines for conducing participatory research (Park, 1999; Reardon, 1998; Bopp, 1994). One rarely referenced article by Vandenberg and Fear (1983) provided practical advice for PR investigators in their comparison of the radical PR approach (Hall, 1975, 1981) and their own utilitarian approach.

The methods typically used in PR project are distinct to each individual study. Nevertheless, some commonalties in processes used for facilitating such an investigation do exist. First the research facilitator must identify a community interested in developing a PR study. The requirements for the participants in this type of an inquiry are more rigorous than in most other forms of social science research. Therefore, it is imperative for the research facilitator to clearly communicate the responsibilities of participation and obtain full agreement from the research team members. To expedite this phase of the study, a well-crafted consent form can prove very valuable.

The next stage in a PR study is to establish the research question and data collection methods. PR methodology states that the research participants should direct the investigation, which includes establishing the research question, determining the data collection methods, and providing general leadership for the entire process. In contrast are those PR studies initiated by an external party and introduced to a community suffering from some form of social or economic disadvantage. To create a balance between the theory and practice, the research facilitator(s) should present a draft plan that the participants may accept, reject, and/or modify.

Essential to any PR study is the action of evaluating the needs specific to the research question. During this stage of the research the participants serve as the resource for defining the needs and/or function as the investigators for collecting data. It is important to also collect evidence of the needs. Such data enables the research team to demonstrate to those within and outside of the community that the necessities are legitimate. Notice that the opportunity for dialectic expression and critical inquiry at this point of the research as the participants begin to list their needs, accumulate evidence supported the existence of these needs, and prepare to explain the causes of the needs to those who have influence and power.

Based on the collected information, the research team will choose action plans to address their needs that could help the community overcome their disadvantaged condition, possibly after discussing various options. Finally, the participants are provided the opportunity to evaluate and reflect on their experience for the purpose of considering what changes had occurred, assessing what they had learned, and determining how they could improve the initiative. Evaluation can occur at the end of the study, at the end of a phase, or periodically during the course of the investigation.

The Research Question

While PR is maturing into a refined form of scientific inquiry, improvements still need to be made regarding both the methods used to practice this form of research and the theoretical explanations employed to guide each phase of an investigation. The research question for this study investigated both of the practical and conceptual aspirations of PR by addressing the following problem: How should a low-income community in Northeastern Brazil seek to improve its educational infrastructure by identifying its needs, locating resources to address these needs, and planning for sustainability of their efforts?

The Context

The context for this study, Northeastern Brazil, is one of the most economically distressed areas in all of Latin American in spite of the financial success experienced in the Southern regions of the country (Plank, 1990; Tannen, 1991). The host city for this research effort, Recife, is the largest urban area in Northeastern Brazil, located along the coast and only 8° south of the equator. This city often serves as a refuge to those seeking escape from the inevitable and frequent droughts in the Northeast's enormous semi-arid interior region. The immigrants' hopes for a better life are usually dashed in a city with an oppressive concentration of poverty – in a region that may be the most financially challenged in all of Latin America (Tannen, 1991). From these circumstances are born the *favelas*: the shantytowns with houses made of course bricks or wood, one on top of the other, separated by narrow streams of raw sewage. Like gasoline on a fire, these living conditions give rise to a plethora of social problems such as drug abuse, alcoholism, child prostitution, and other desperate acts performed in an effort to escape the oppressive conditions of poverty. It is in this context that participatory research investigations are often conducted. Under these circumstances participants are considered oppressed and disadvantaged. In this environment the research question was posed.

The Presentation

The research question and research proposal would need to be economized into a form that could be easily communicated and understood by low-income

community residents. A presentation of the summarized research proposal was drafted by myself, and then reviewed and revised by staff from my host agency in Recife, the Dom Helder Câmara Center for Studies and Social Action (CENDHEC), a local non-governmental organization. The proposal was explained to include three phases that would fulfill two objectives, guided by one methodology: 3, 2, 1. The phases were described as follows:

1. To define the educational necessities of the community.
2. To strive to locate resources, both financial and political, associated with the educational necessities we identified.
3. To discontinue my involvement with the project and pass the responsibility of facilitating the work to the community members, CENDHEC, or a combination of the two.

The two objectives were:

1. To strive toward gaining educational improvements for Jardim Uchôa. This objective was more practical in nature, and could be called the *project* portion of the research.
2. To teach the community residents how to plan and implement a development project, and therefore attain greater autonomy and independence. This objective was formed to examine the research methodology and consider its validity as an effective means for conducting participatory community development.

The one methodology was explained as follows:

> Social Science researchers of low-income communities often collect their data, thank the residents, and leave without directly contributing to the welfare of the area. In contrast, we would work side-by-side in a participatory research project and assert ourselves to improving education in Jardim Uchôa. This meant that we would work as a single alliance to develop educational improvement initiatives. Furthermore, we would actively seek to have the community members direct the course of the investigation as much as possible. Indigenous leadership would provide an opportunity for the residents to learn how to conduct this type of project and free the community from always relying on external parties to initiate future development projects. Finally, the PR methodology would provide for the most authentic method to collect information because the community residents would furnish the data and decisions that would guide the study from start to finish.

The proposal was presented to a group of educators and community leaders in the low-income community of Jardim Uchôa who were interested in improving the educational opportunities in their neighborhood. Along with the presentation was an explanation of the time commitment involved with this type of research/development initiative. The residents responded by saying that I was welcome to work with them. In other words, they gladly welcomed me and were willing work in partnership on the research project.

We initiated our work by reviewing the relevance of the research proposal, and deciding to focus our efforts on improving educational opportunities for the residents

of the poorest area in Jardim Uchôa: the Special Zone of Social Interest (ZEIS). This section of the community could be characterized as a *favela*, a shantytown, with all of the vices and challenges listed above.

Results from the Field

Phase I: Four Prioritized Needs

Upon completion of several group meetings with the research team, visits to schools in the area, and visits with residents of the ZEIS, we accumulated as list of 45 educational necessities and related supporting evidence. The research participants reviewed the list of necessities and realized that it would be impossible to address all of the problems at one time. In response, the group prioritized four items they determined were most significant and in need of immediate attention:

- A shortage of *instructional material*
- A lack of sufficiently *trained teachers*
- A stock of *community schools*[3] in need of improvements
- The absence of a *municipal school* in the community desperately in need of more publicly funded education

The four necessities were defined by four small groups, or subgroups, composed of residents from Jardim Uchôa involved in this research. The necessity of *Instructional Material* was researched and detailed by a group of community-school teachers:

> It is well known that needy communities' education systems suffer serious problems including the necessity of instructional material. In Jardim Uchôa, the community and state schools do not have sufficient material for the children. This diminishes the quality of learning and also creates difficulties for the teachers. For this reason, we seek support from businesses and public and private organizations so that together we can change the reality of a poor education to a more promising one in Jardim Uchôa.

This group also developed an inventory of materials that were most in need for the schools serving the ZEIS, provided numerous examples of working conditions without these materials, and discussed frustrations that develop as public and private funding agencies decided to postpone or withhold support.

The subgroup assigned to investigate and define *Training of Teachers* was composed of several community-school teachers and the cultural interpreter for the study from CENDHEC:

> In the investigation of educational necessities within the community of Jardim Uchôa, we encountered, among others, professional *Training of Teachers* as one of the points that must be supported. Knowing that the problem exists, and that it

[3] Community schools are educational facilities that are privately operated, yet charge no tuition. Funding for these schools often is provided by local and international non-governmental organizations, public funds routed through community school associations, and/or assistance due to religious affiliations.

> is serious, the teachers hope for support that will enhance their level of knowledge, and consequently, that of their students.

Furthermore, they identified a number of disciplines that were particularly in need of support among existing teachers and drafted a list of educational institutions throughout Recife that could provide technical assistance and training. This group also critically reflected on the limited professional development opportunities for teachers in Jardim Uchôa, and informed the research team that quality teacher training programs were inaccessible due to proximity, finances, and excessively difficult entrance examinations.

The subgroup assigned to define and research the need *Improvements for Community Schools* included several community school directors and teachers:

> The five community schools in Jardim Uchôa serve approximately 540 children and adolescents. These schools confront difficulties with their infrastructure, permanent materials, human resources, and finances. Because there are so few public schools in the area, the demand from students on the community schools is growing, and the difficulties to serve these students, in spite of the support received, still is insufficient.

Given the potential breadth of this group's assignment, they decided to focus specifically on improving teacher salaries, securing workshops for their staff on social and health issues, and pursing support for the maintenance and expansion of their facilities. This group also discussed the efforts of a particular public agency that withheld resources and denounced the community schools movement in an effort to dismantle this educational network.

The subgroup that addressed defining the *Municipal School*[4] included mothers from the ZEIS, one community organizer, and myself. We produced the following explanation:

> The state schools that serve Jardim Uchôa do not have room for all youth between the ages of seven and 14 [which by law have the right to a free public education]. This year, the state schools discontinued preschool and will do the same with grades one to four in the next few years. The objective is that the municipal schools will take responsibility for these grade levels and for kindergarten. Until today, Jardim Uchôa does not have a municipal school. Therefore, the problem of education for our children is becoming more severe.

The dialect exchange in this struggle was crystal clear. The State Secretariat of Education wanted to reserve funds and divest itself of teaching preschool to grade four. The community on the other hand was significantly interested in protecting the right of their children to receive a free, publicly provided education as guaranteed in the constitution (Diário Oficial da República Federativa do Brasil, 1991). The community did secure a commitment from the City of Recife to build a municipally funded school. Evidence of this commitment was demonstrated when the city finalized the purchase of a plot of land to build the school just outside of the ZEIS. The subgroup also initiated a petition to request that the state schools in the area not

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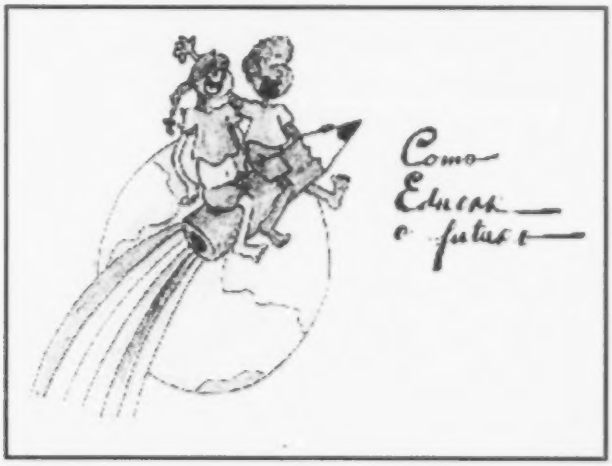
[4] The public educational P-12 system in Brazil consists of school supported through municipal, state, or federal departments of education.

discontinue their attention to preschool through grade four until the municipal school was completed. Unfortunately, this second effort suffered the demise of competing interests within the research team.

The Project Name and Logo

In an effort to create a sense of identity for our work together, the participants decided to select a name from among a list, one created by each participant. Our winning name was *Projecto Como Educar o Futuro* or *Project How to Educate for the Future* (Project CEF). This name became the first pennant of our work together and marking the beginning of a transfer of leadership into local hands. Several phenomenal changes occurred through this exercise. By allowing the participants to offer a creative part of themselves to the project, we initiated a procedure that enabled the group members to feel personally associated with the project. What we did not realize at the time was that we had developed a decision-making system that would be used repeatedly due to its efficacious results. The group members began to increasingly appreciate participation, and even started to speak out when an opportunity was overlooked where they could exercise their right to decide. It was during this stage that the participants began to refer to our work together as "our project" rather than "your project" (i.e., the facilitator's project). As we began to see our efforts coalesce, we develop greater interest in legitimizing our project and provide it with the identity that formal projects in Brazil possess. Such was the nascence for the idea of creating a project logo. Using the selection system develop previously, each participant presented a drawing at a group meeting. The research team selected a draft of what became the formal project logo to be used on flyers, letterhead, and the seminar brochure/invitation (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: The Project Name and Logo



Phase II: The Seminar

Phase II of the research began with deliberations over which agencies and organizations to contact in an effort to locate resources concerning the four prioritized educational needs. At the same time, the group began to discuss the idea of conducting a seminar in which we would invite all of the agencies we thought might be interested in helping us develop ideas, locate financial assets, and/or acquire greater political clout.

A flurry of activities, meetings, and decisions marked this period of the research. In addition, the research team began planning, organizing, evaluating the data we had accumulated, and developing action plans independent of any external facilitation by the cultural interpreter or myself. The research participants began to clearly demonstrate that the seminar was their event, and that they were in control. The decisions made by the participants included choosing the date of the seminar, organizing a dramatization that would represent the educational needs in the ZEIS, selecting a moderator for the seminar from among the research participants, etc. The seminar symbolized an effort on the part of the research team to overcome the current deficiencies in the educational infrastructure serving the ZEIS of Jardim Uchôa, and create a future of hope for the area students and their parents.

The 1st Seminar for the Education Necessities of Jardim Uchôa was held on May 27, 1998. Participants in the seminar included representatives from the State Secretariat for Education, faculty members from the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) and the Catholic University of Pernambuco (UNICAP), members of community schools associations and community development agencies, and educators from schools in and around Jardim Uchôa. More than 60 people in all participated in the plenary sessions and workshops at this all day seminar. Four workshops within the seminar corresponded to the four prioritized needs and were designed to give the Project CEF participants the opportunity to express their opinions about the educational needs in Jardim Uchôa, explain the findings of our research, and work together with the seminar participants to begin crafting improvement plans. Results from the day included four sets of action plans associated with the four prioritized needs and a list of seminar participants willing to assist the Project CEF team in developing and implementing educational improvement plans for Jardim Uchôa and the ZEIS.

With only a few minor glitches, the seminar was a major success. The significance of this achievement is accentuated when one realizes that the seminar was planned and implemented by residents of a shantytown with limited formal education and financial resources. Many of the research participants marked the event as a personal victory as well as an accomplishment for the ZEIS of Jardim Uchôa.

Phase III: Sustainability of Project CEF

The sustainability of Project CEF appeared promising given the training and experience the participants had received and the resources they had collected. The details for this optimistic assessment included:

- The training and experience
  - How to plan and facilitate a meeting
  - How to lead discussions
  - How to design projects
  - How to plan and implement a seminar
  - How to conduct an investigation, collect data, and develop action plans that address local needs
- The unity that had grown within the research team and the strong network between them that could serve to augment the power of their voice as they continued to pursue additional resources
- The compiled list of seminar participants who were willing to technically assist in the implementation of improvements (e.g., local faculty, private school educators, etc.).
- The action plans developed at the seminar – bound in a final report created for and by the research participants listing all of the events and accomplishments over the course of the 9 month project
- The commitment by CENDHEC to assist in the continuation of Project CEF
- The determination of the participants to retain autonomy of Project CEF as they worked with CENDHEC and other technical assistants

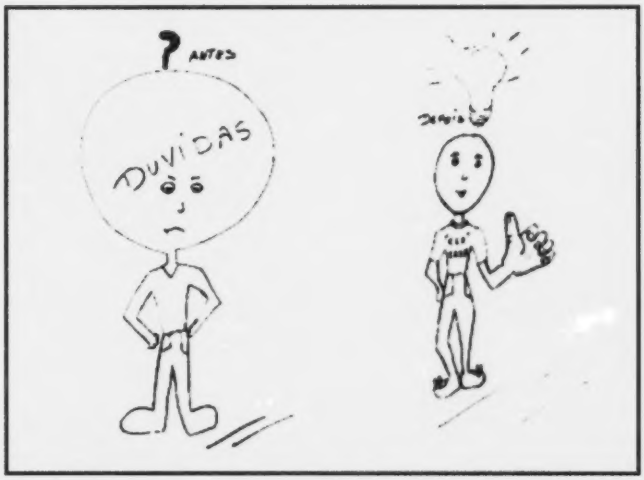
The commitment from CENDHEC was a particularly important asset to foster the sustainability of the project. The research participants recognized that the goals of Project CEF and CENDHEC were not perfectly aligned. In response, the groups agreed to meet after my departure to outline how they would work together, maintain the participatory integrity of Project CEF, and serve as an asset to one another.

Participants' Final Evaluations

The final evaluations of Project CEF provided the research participants an opportunity to communicate their impressions of our work together using whatever mode of expression they preferred. One group of participants performed a dramatization that characterized the creativity that was needed for the community schools to attend the educational needs of the area. Others used prepared evaluation forms, orally communicated their opinions, or depicted their impressions through drawings as in Figure 3. This sketching illustrates "before and after" the implementation of Project CEF. *Before* Project CEF, the participants had their minds full of many doubts due to the problems that they faced at their schools. *After*, thanks

to their work with Project CEF, they had discovered many ideas and confronted their doubts and struggles as community school educators.

Figure 3: Final Evaluation



Findings: Taxonomy of Participation

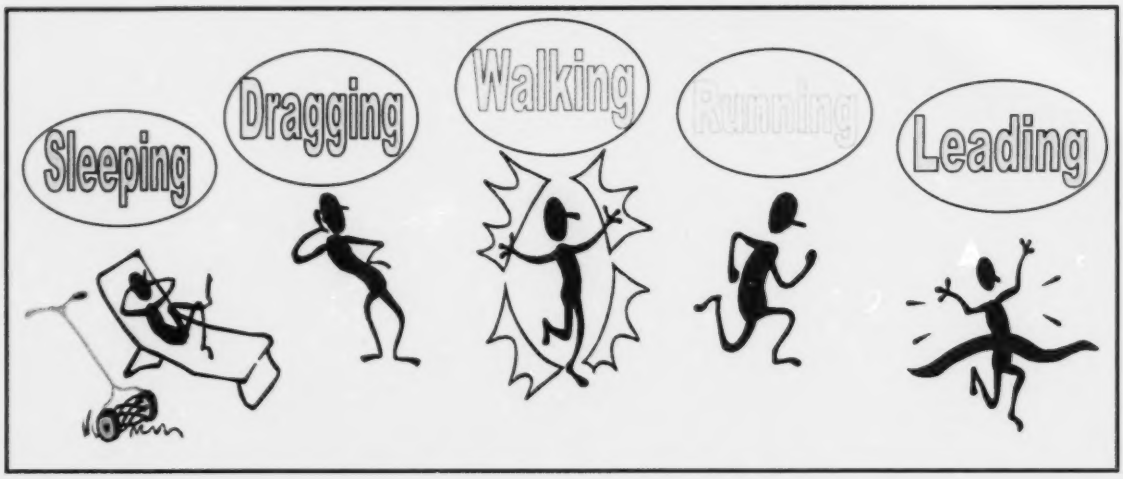
Analysis in a PR investigation is primarily conducted in the field with the research participants; such were the practical results listed above. To complement this dialogue of PR, I also examined the relationship of the theory to practice. The following discussion and taxonomy of participation hopefully serve as a contribution to PR theory as a whole, not only as an explanation applicable to this study.

After several months in the field I began to notice that some of the research participants were rarely interacting in group discussions or decision-making processes. The entire research team discussed this challenge on several occasions. In response we developed a number of strategies to encourage participation among the quieter group members.

As I considered the relationship of the theory and practice, I realized that we had been trying to fit a square peg into a round whole. Specifically, we had been expecting mild-mannered people to become passionate participants in a matter of months. This may not seem like a brilliant observation, but the PR methodology did not describe anything but deliberate participation by the community residents (Hall, 1975,1982; Brown & Tandon, 1983; Reason, 1994, Park, 1999).

Participants within the research team could observably be divided into five divisions of activity or motivation: sleeping, dragging (which connotes dancing slowly in Brazilian Portuguese), walking, running, and leading. The illustration of these divisions is characterized somewhat whimsically in Figure 4, but reflects the existence of serious differentiations in participation.

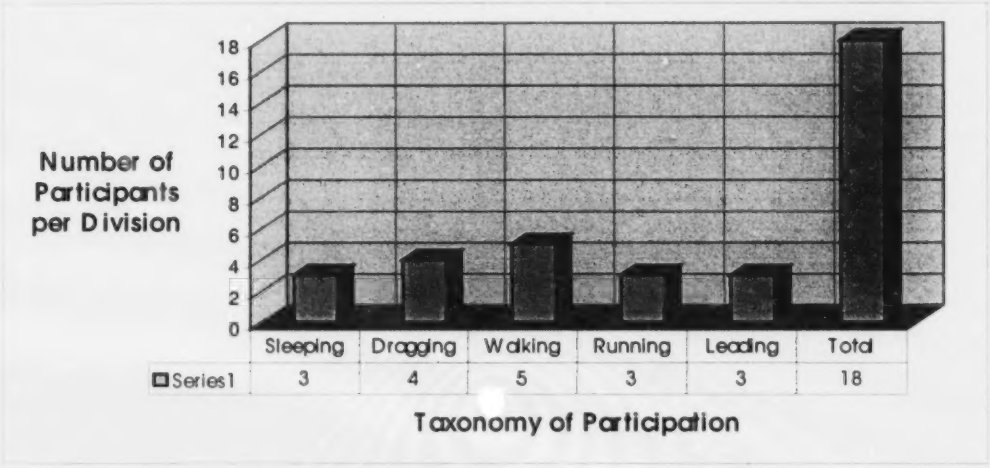
Figure 4: Taxonomy of Participation



Sleeping group members were those who attended meetings but did not participate. Those who were *dragging* were group members who occasionally said something if prodded, but otherwise remained quiet. I observed that the participants from these two levels tended to have more sensitive personalities, and therefore were more responsive to sensitive encouragement than vigorous prodding. There also were *draggers* who did talk. These individuals often discussed thoughts and issues unrelated to the group discussions.

Walking is the breakthrough point: the midway between sleeping and leading. These participants showed interest, and entered into discussions. They demonstrated signs of critically considering the issues being discussed, and began to evaluate their role as an individual in relation to society as a whole. These group members also showed signs of wanting to learn, not just be heard. Those group members who were *running* provided leadership in some group discussions, especially on topics that were motivating to them. These members recognize that they played a role not only in their immediate environments (i.e., school or home), but also in their community as a whole. These members also had a tendency to realize how their activities related to national and international issues. Finally, *leading* group members were those who are already engaged in development activities for their community, and possibly for other communities in the city. These participants were role models who expressed their opinions and initiated improvements out of strong convictions and determination to rise above the poverty of their surroundings. I found it important to encourage these participants to recognize their natural leadership abilities, and to serve as teachers and mentors to other community members.

Table 1: Distribution of Participation Using the Taxonomy



I calculated how many of the research team members fit into each division of the taxonomy, and found an approximate bell curve distribution (See Table 1). The participants included in this computation were only those who attended two or more meetings during Phase I. Given that human behavioral patterns often fall into a bell curve pattern, I inferred that the taxonomy was generally accurate.

In response to these data, I considered how I would encourage participation among the group members. I realized that it was unrealistic to expect a *sleeper* to become a *leader*. Nevertheless, it was not unrealistic to help one who is *sleeping* to wake up, or to help one who is *dragging* to begin lifting his or her feet off the ground. Just as in any human developmental process, learning and change comes in stages. This taxonomy of participation helped me to overcome the personal frustration I was experiencing as I tried to effectively implement the methodology yet deal with the realities of the group members' temperaments and personalities. This observation also helped the some of the research team members who were struggling to understand why some group members were less expressive.

Results from Post-fieldwork Analysis

Hybrid Analysis Model

The initial plan for post-fieldwork analysis was to compare the data (i.e., transcribed meetings) to Hall's definition of PR (1975, 1982). A grounded theory/ phenomenological approach was not attractive because the goal was to examine the efficacy of a *pre-determined* theory. It became obvious that the initial analysis plan was too constraining as I reviewed the data and observed that it was richer than what the theory could explain. Therefore, a partial grounded theory/partial pre-determined theory approach was used that allowed the texts to speak for themselves (Van Manen, 1990),

while at the same time searching for data that could support or contrast the tenets of PR theory.

As the themes began to accumulate, four overarching categories emerged: Verbal Communications, Critical Thinking, Participatory Research Processes, and Context Issues.

Coding System

The preliminary set of themes was useful, but appeared excessively complicated and contained some themes that were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Therefore, I decided to reduce the list down to a set of themes and codes that were relatively easy to remember, specifically defined, and mutually exclusive. Still divided into the four overarching categories, each theme was identified with the following characteristics:

- The Code: An abbreviation that represented the *theme*
- The Weight: A numeric value corresponding of the number of times the *theme* was associated with sections of text
- The Definition: An brief explanation of the *theme*
- The PR points: An association of the theme to one or more aspects of the six part PR definition (Hall, 1982)

Methods

In a continuing effort to contribute to participatory research, the following methods are listed as part of an ongoing discussion of the practical procedures used within this type of investigation (Park, 1999, Bopp, 1994; and Vandenberg & Fear, 1983).

Need for Flexibility

One of the principal requirements to remember in the course of conducting a participatory investigation is the need for flexibility. A few days after arriving in Recife, I contacted my host agency, CENDHEC, for the purpose of arranging a meeting to discuss the details of my research plan and negotiate where this work was to occur. The CENDHEC technical team recommended that I not conduct my research in the community that had been initially identified due to a number of unforeseen reasons. Before I had an opportunity to begin visiting additional communities, all of the nation's police forces went on strike. The situation in Recife became so dangerous that the military had to secure the city (and I assume other cities throughout the country). During this time, I was advised to stay close to home, and so I did. Such was the first month of my field experience.

Regarding the actual study, any preliminary plans that are drafted before meeting with the participants are subject to change. Further flexibility may also be needed as

the participants prioritize and then reprioritize their interests during the course of the investigation. If this occurs, it may be useful for the research facilitator to help the participants differentiate between those interests that are short-lived and those that endure over the course of the many discussions.

Use of a Cultural Interpreter

The second consideration is the identification of a cultural interpreter. A cultural interpreter not only provides support for the translation of words, but also what those words mean in the local environment. Upon arrival in Brazil, I had set a goal to learn as much about the language and culture as I could. Nevertheless, on the eve of launching my research I realized that I was still a novice, and was in need of some handholding. One of the CENDHEC staff had expressed considerable interest in my work and was invited to join the participants and I. She proved to be an invaluable addition to our research serving not only as cultural interpreter, but also as facilitator, leader, mediator, jester, teacher, and friend.

Group Think

While we were making great strides, I suspected that "group think" had taken place on several occasions (Harvey, 1974). This phenomenon is characterized by decisions making practices that cause a group to determine a certain direction that no individual member prefers. To help prevent this problem, it is important to check the relationship between opinions of the group as a whole and those of each individual.

Balancing Participation and Momentum

A troublesome question in action-oriented research is how should the facilitator balance *efficiency and quality* participation? In other words, as a facilitator of our work I wrestled at times to keep the process moving quickly enough to maintain interest while also letting the group move slow enough to develop its own decision-making procedures. The resolution of this question was one of the most significant personal experiences I encountered during this field portion of the research: What I like to call an "Oh my!" experience. I realized that a participatory format encourages us to work through all of the dilemmas we encounter in the course of the research. I did not need to carry the stress of making our work succeed solely on my shoulders. I could share my concerns and doubts with the research team, and seek their ideas in order to develop creative solutions. While this realization may not have resolved the problem immediately, it did provide me with the means of dealing with the opposing interests of efficiency and quality participation.

Research Facilitation Recommendations

In keeping with the PR methodology, facilitation of meetings followed a more flexible form that included:

- Expression of concerns in the participants personal lives (e.g., illness, bad traffic, activities at a particular school, etc.)

- Integration of the research and individuals' interests
- Recognition and acceptance that the group would take mental breaks and digress from time to time
- A cyclical flow of ideas
- Facilitation that
  - Allowed the group to discuss their interests and concerns as they arose
  - Remembered the ideas through which the group flowed
  - Reminded the team of issues it had forgotten to resolve

A colleague from a non-governmental service agency described this form of facilitation as a *feminine* process that she also used in her work as a low-income community developer. She further explained that this style of group direction contrasted a more *masculine* form that was controlling, agenda driven, and clearly distinguished between personal and business concerns.

The challenge with this type of non-linear participant driven process is to create a balance that allows a free form of expression, while at the same time produces results. A process that condones the expression of personal concerns communicates that the work will be considerate and sensitive to the participants emotional needs. The results are necessary to help produce motivation and maintain interests.

Ethics

The final two meetings of Project CEF provided the group an opportunity to debrief from the seminar. These sessions proved to be especially useful because the participants needed to express their frustration regarding two seminar participants who were more interested in their own personal agendas than that of the seminar. The research team spoke foremost of a graduate student from Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) and former director of the Association of Community Schools (AEC). They discussed how this man dominated discussions, insulted the Project CEF participants, and made a general nuisance of himself when he did not agree with someone. We reviewed the consent form and considered how we had encountered the only risk anticipated with the project: the risk of being rejected or insulted in the process of interacting with people during Phase II of the research. One of the participants who was blatantly slandered by this man specifically said that she was not discouraged by the encounter, but was motivated to confront such difficult people and continue to stand up for educational improvements to the community.

The group also briefly discussed the ideas expressed by a representative from the State Secretariat of Education. The research participants previously discussed and unanimously agreed that the state public schools in Jardim Uchôa could not enroll all of the students in the area. Through their involvement in community school education, the research team members heard countless stories of parents who had been turned away by the overburdened public schools, and witnessed an increasing enrollment at their own schools that were even more financially challenged. The Project CEF participants

expressed this dilemma in a dramatization at the beginning of the seminar. Even principals of the state schools serving Jardim Uchôa, being politically careful, inferred that they may have turned away some students. The representative from the Secretariat of Education took offense to this claim and said that it was not true, namely because there were communities nearby that had schools with vacancies. The research group retorted that these vacancies were useless for children of the ZEIS and Jardim Uchôa who were too young and/or too poor to travel to these schools.[5] The representative maintained her position.

During the debriefing, the research group considered that the representative may have been standing firm out of obligation to maintain the official position held by the Office of the State Secretary of Education. The debriefing exercise proved to be particularly useful for considering the dialectic that existed between the research team and those outside of the community who disagreed with the Project CEF evaluations of education in Jardim Uchôa. The research participants came to understand that the more publicly they expressed their need and sought to locate resources associated with these needs, the more likely they were to face opposing interests.

Summary

Participatory research continues to evolve on a practical and theoretical level through dialogue and reflection of its application to transform oppressed communities. In this case, we have reviewed the definition of PR and attempted to clarify the meaning of this research methodology in comparison to other action-oriented forms of research.

The study used to examine the efficacy of the theory demonstrated that PR could fulfill the educational and participatory objectives. Nevertheless, real transformation of society and redistribution of power and influence cannot be achieved through a single investigation like this (PRIA, 2000). PR is seen as part of a movement that grows in small increments, just as in an educational process. In this case, PR serves as an effort to re-educate society on both sides of the tracks, to encourage greater participation among those who believe that no one would listen to them, and to open a new dialogue for those who long for respect and the opportunity for a better life.

[5] Public schools in Brazil do not provide transportation to and from school. Student may purchase discounted passes for using the public transportation system, requiring resources that many financially distressed families cannot afford.

Resources

The following list of scholars, journals, and academic societies are offered as a service to any who wishes to learn more about participatory research.

Scholars

Budd Hall, University of Toronto. www.oise.utoronto.ca. Hall currently serves on the faculty at the University of Toronto in the Department of Adult Education, Community Development & Counselling Psychology. His writings on participatory research methodology provide reference for nearly all engage in this form of study.

Rajesh Tandon, PRIA, New Delhi, INDIA. www.pria.org. A colleague of Hall, Tandon serves as the director of PRIA (formerly the Society for Participatory Research in Asia). The PRIA web site provides some excellent summaries of PR methodology and examples of current studies. His writings also are essential reading for any PR scholar.

Orlando Fals-Borda, National University of Columbia, Professor Emeritus. The writings by Fals-Borda have provided many PR scholars with an understanding of PR theory and examples of practical studies, especially in Latin America.

John Gaventa. Former director of the Highlander Center and faculty member at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Gaventa has served as the preeminent scholar on PR in the United States.

Myles Horton, Highlander Research and Education Center, Tennessee. www.hrec.org. The late Myles Horton began what is now the Highlander Center in the 1930s as a popular education facility and later as a center for PR working with disadvantaged communities throughout the lower Appalachians.

Journals

CONVERGENCE: An international journal of adult education. Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. (1968-present).

PROSPECTS: Quarterly Review of Comparative Education. Paris, FRANCE: UNESCO, (1972-present).

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT JOURNAL. Manchester, ENGLAND: Oxford University Press, (1949-present).

Professional Societies

International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), www.web.net/icae/eindex.htm (go to www.web.net/icae to see hub site for regional societies). This academic society was formed specifically to support and spread information on participatory research,

and serves as the hub for regional societies in Latin America, North America, Europe, and Asia. ICAE is the host society for the periodical *Convergence*.

American Association of Adult Continuing Education (AAACE), www.albany.edu/aaace. The proceedings of their conferences include good quality PR studies on a regular basis. I believe that this is the foremost adult education academic society in the U.S.

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